

Public Involvement

2.1 Background

Transportation is a public issue in the Coeur d'Alene area. The very basis for the US 95 Coeur d'Alene Corridor Study was derived from the public's desire and need for an efficient, effective, and safe transportation corridor in northern Idaho, particularly in the Coeur d'Alene and Hayden area. Residents, agencies, businesses and local and state governments helped define and communicate those needs.

2.2 Goals and Objectives of the Public Involvement Plan

A Public Involvement Plan was carefully designed to include a variety of options and opportunities for meaningful and appropriate public participation. The goals for the public involvement effort were to:

- Educate and enhance the public awareness of the transportation issues for US 95;
- Identify a cooperative strategy for handling current and future transportation issues or concerns on US 95;
- Achieve local understanding and broad support for the public involvement strategy; and
- Obtain public feedback on the issues and potential solutions proposed for the corridor.

To meet those goals a number of themes were integrated in the Public Involvement Plan effort:

- *Travel Safety* – Illustrating how corridor functions are impacted by design and access decisions and how transportation system enhancements can improve safety conditions;
- *Education* – Providing background information to the general public and agencies to make informed decisions;
- *Participation* – Including wide range of citizen and affected group participation in an ongoing effort to help build interest in continuing participation;
- *Understanding* – Providing Study documentation and information in a wide variety of formats to help ensure a broad level of Study knowledge; and
- *Action* – Summarizing Study findings that would lead to a set of implementation measures for further project Studying and eventual design and construction.

Effective implementation of the Public Involvement Plan was a critical part of the needs assessment process, helping to build broader understanding and support for the Study's findings. A variety of opportunities were provided. Copies of all public involvement materials (newsletters, public meeting sign-in sheets, summaries and comment forms, etc.) are included in **Appendix A**.

2.3 Study Participants

It was anticipated that not everyone in the Coeur d'Alene/Hayden area would seek participation in the Plan process and that those who would, would participate in a number of different ways. To reach the whole community the Public Involvement Plan targeted three types of Study participants: (1) active; (2) casual; and (3) random.

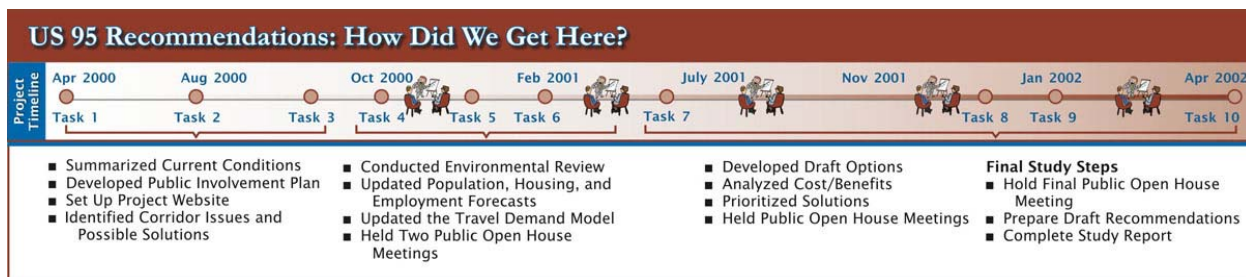
A small portion of the community actively served on one of the three study groups or attended one of several public meetings/open houses. These study groups and public meetings were held periodically throughout the Study process. The schedule, as illustrated in **Exhibit 2-1**, summarizes the timing of the

study group and public meeting dates and the completion of various tasks within the planning process. Usually this portion of the community is small, often less than 5 percent.

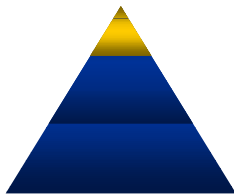
Other members of the community, who typically do not have the time to serve on an advisory group or attend public meetings, were afforded the opportunity to participate at home through either the Project Website (designed specifically for the US 95 Corridor Study) or the distribution of the Study newsletter. A number of local and regional newspaper articles also publicized the Study. The casual participants in the community typically constitute only about 10 percent of the population.

Those in the community who were not likely to participate directly were represented through a Public Opinion Research survey and large group studies. Typically, non-participants can comprise 90 to 95 percent of the community. The purpose of the Public Opinion Research was to elicit critical input from a random sample of the community to reflect the greater public interest, concerns, and ideas regarding transportation issues and possible improvements within the US 95 corridor.

Figure 2-1. Schedule



2.4 Approach



How the “Active” Participants were Engaged

For those in the community with a high level of interest in the US 95 Corridor Study, three study groups were defined including a Technical Advisory Group, Community Task Force, and Joint Board. **Appendix A** summarizes the Study membership of the study groups. Each group met individually, and then in a combined setting at five major milestones of the Study process. Each of the US 95 study groups had specific roles.

2.4.1 Technical Advisory Group

- Help in the identification of corridor issues in the technical development of the Study;
- Assist in evaluating needed transportation improvements - projects, policies and programs; and
- Inclusion of agencies of jurisdiction to coordinate agency issues and build regional support for agency policies, programs and projects.

2.4.2 Community Task Force

- Help in the identification of corridor issues and opportunities;
- Help build understanding of issues with stakeholders; and
- Help build consensus toward short- and long-term transportation solutions in the US 95 corridor.

- Help in the identification of corridor issues;

2.4.3 Joint Board

- Help build understanding of issues with constituents; and
- Help build consensus toward short- and long-term transportation solutions in the US 95 corridor.

2.4.4 Public Meetings

The core opportunity for public participation in the planning process was through a series of five public meetings. The meetings were held in an Open House format to present and discuss issues and the major findings of the US 95 Corridor Study effort. The meetings were specifically scheduled, planned, and designed with suitable formats to provide appropriate opportunities for public comment, discussion, and review during all phases of the planning process. Advance public notice was provided using available and appropriate formats and methods such as media press releases, newsletters, and postings on the Project Website. Opportunities to provide public comment at the public meetings included both verbal and written comment formats. The total attendance for the five open house meetings was approximately 290.



How the Casual Participants were Engaged

Many people are interested in the US 95 Corridor Study effort, but do not have the time to serve on committees or attend public meetings. The Public Involvement effort reached these individuals in a number of creative ways:

- Project Newsletters
- Press Releases
- US 95 Project Web Site

2.4.5 Project Newsletters and Press Releases

A series of five project newsletters and press releases were prepared and distributed to participants in advance of the Public Open House meetings. The mailing list for the newsletter distribution grew considerably over the course of the Study. Participants who either attended the Open House meetings, telephoned ITD for information, or accessed the project Website were added to the mailing list (almost 50 participants on the Project Website signed up for future newsletter distribution). The final project mailing list includes more than 650 contacts. **Appendix A** includes copies of each of the five project newsletters.

2.4.6 Project Website

An interactive project website was developed and maintained throughout the study period. Exhibits from each of the open house meetings were posted and available for review via the site. In addition, an initial survey could be completed by website visitors to help identify study area issues and the range of possible solutions. The website also provided opportunities for written comments and requests for project newsletters.

2.4.7 Subarea Group Meetings

Mid-way through the planning process, as future transportation improvement options were being drafted and evaluated, a series of subarea group meetings were held. The purpose of the subarea meetings was to discuss initial reactions to the Study, and identify early site-specific issues and concerns of property owners along the corridor. Major stakeholders were invited and took part in productive discussions regarding transportation opportunities and constraints, which vary significantly within the study area. **Appendix A** includes a detailed summary of the subarea group meetings. The discussions and outcome of these meetings helped the Project Team refine their assessment and findings. The meeting topics focused on the following US 95 segments or subareas:

1. Ironwood (I-90 to Spokane River)
2. Appleway/I-90 Interchange
3. Spokane River Crossing/Blackwell Island
4. Garwood to Ohio Match Road
5. Hanley to Dalton
6. Pedestrian/Bicycle (area-wide)
7. Spokane River to Mica Creek

2.4.8 Agency and Civic Group Presentations

ITD made 19 presentations of the Study process and findings to local agency and civic groups. These included:

1. Kootenai Perspectives
2. Hayden City Council (twice)
3. NIC Athletics Department/Civic Center proponents
4. Coeur d'Alene Chamber of Commerce and Coeur d'Alene Board of Realtors (two joint meetings)
5. Hayden/Hayden Lake Chamber of Commerce (twice)
6. Coeur d'Alene Leadership
7. Coeur d'Alene Public Works Committee
8. Coeur d'Alene City Council (three times)
9. Kootenai County Commissioners (twice)
10. Coeur d'Alene Chamber of Commerce Policy Board
11. Post Falls City Council.
12. Coeur d'Alene Rotary
13. Bayview Chamber of Commerce
14. Hayden Planning Commission



How the Greater Public was Engaged

Not unlike similar transportation or planning studies, there is that portion of the greater community that is either not interested, or has little or no time to directly participate in the Study process. Nevertheless, this group is important and was considered early on, so they could be integrated into the Study process. Through creative implementation

of a public opinion research study, the Public Involvement Program reached a representative sample of the Coeur d'Alene community to:

- Help define the corridor issues from the public;
- Help define public understanding of the highway, land use, environmental and financial trade-offs; and
- Provide broad-based understanding and help build consensus towards corridor Study findings.

2.4.9 Public Opinion Research

The US 95 Public Opinion Research involves two major steps: (1) an initial survey and (2) large group studies. The survey was scientifically designed with random sample surveys. Similar questionnaires were posted to the public website and administered to the various Study Groups for a comparison of responses. The goal was to hear from a representative cross-section of the Coeur d'Alene/Hayden/Dalton community.

Step 1 – Initial Survey

The Step 1 Initial Survey was general in nature and conducted to identify concerns people have about transportation issues in general and with US 95 in particular. It was also used to assess general feelings about the quality of life in the region and identify what problems, including traffic congestion, are the most important ones for government officials to do something about. It also included demographic questions. Responses allowed the Project Team to better understand how important US 95 is to study area residents, and what kinds of solutions are already on people's minds.

Step 2 – Large Group Study

The Step 2 Large Group Study involved presenting participants various future improvement options for US 95 and gathering in-depth information about their (public) attitudes and underlying motivations. The Large Group Study participants were randomly selected local citizens (about 40 in total). The goal of the random selection was to select a representative cross-section of the community for each discussion. A topic guide for the large group discussions was prepared, including a series of preliminary and possible long-range improvement options for US 95.

Separate reports summarizing the Public Opinion Research are provided in **Appendix A**.

